

**South Carolina Department of Social Services
Family Independence and Food Stamps Programs
YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Confidentiality

- The information that you give to DSS will be kept confidential.

Exceptions:

1. Information may be disclosed to other federal and state agencies for official examination and to law enforcement officials for the purpose of apprehending fleeing felons or probation/parole violators.
2. You agree that confidential information about you and/or your family may be released to other organizations if it is directly related to the operation of the FI and FS Programs.

Social Security Numbers

In order to get benefits from the FI, FS and other programs:

- You must provide or apply for a Social Security number (SSN) for those persons who want to get FI and/or FS. Although SSNs are not required for non-applicants or persons ineligible for FI or FS, income information must be included for all BG members.
- If DSS needs the SSN on a person for whom you did not provide information, a DSS worker will contact you to discuss the reasons for requesting the number and what will happen if you do not give DSS the number.
- SSNs will be used in computer matching programs and other reviews and you cannot receive FS benefits for any person an SSN is not provided for.
- If you do not have an SSN for an applicant, it will not delay your application, provided he/she applies for one immediately. DSS will help you apply for an SSN.
- DSS will not share or give SSNs of non-applicants or individuals ineligible for benefits with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Citizenship and Immigration Status

- You must provide citizenship and immigration status information for those persons who want to get FI and/or FS.
- DSS will not share the citizenship and immigration status of non-applicants or individuals ineligible for benefits with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Assignment of Child Support

- Any child support you receive or may receive for an FI eligible child must be assigned to DSS.
- DSS may take action to collect child support from both maternal and paternal grandparents if the child's parent(s) are under age 18 and receive FI.

Paternity Establishment

- In order to get benefits from the FI Program, you must cooperate with the Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) in establishing paternity and obtaining child support for your children.
- If you have a good reason to believe cooperation may cause harm to you or your child(ren) ask your case manager about establishing "good cause" for failure to cooperate.

Varied Benefits

- If you receive child support through CSED, your FS benefits may change from month to month because of any changes in the child support you receive.

Work/Training Programs

- You must participate in a work or training program in order to receive FI or FS benefits, unless you are exempt from the work program requirement.

Verification

- A DSS worker may need to contact other people or organizations (neighbors, banks, employers, etc.) in order to verify your income, bank accounts, alien status, medical/shelter expenses, insurance/disability/retirement benefits, medical history and any other fact that relates to your eligibility for FI or FS.

- For food stamps, failure to report or verify any deductible expenses will be seen as a statement that your household does not want to receive a deduction for the unreported expense.

Time Limits

- FI benefits may be time limited. Food stamp benefits are not time limited and the receipt of food stamp benefits has no effect on any other program's time limits.

Fraud

- If you give DSS information that is found to be incorrect for FI or FS your case may be denied or closed.
- You may be subject to prosecution under federal and state laws for giving incorrect information.

Food Stamp Rules and Penalties

- **DO NOT** trade, sell or alter Electronic Benefit (EBT) cards or food stamp coupons.
- **DO NOT** buy ineligible items such as alcoholic beverages or tobacco with food stamp benefits.
- **DO NOT** use your EBT card to pay for food charged to a credit account.
- Violators of the above rules may not be able to get food stamps for a period of 1 year to permanently and may be fined up to \$250,000 or imprisoned up to 20 years or both for violations of \$5000 or greater. A court can also add an additional 18-month FS participation restriction for an individual.
- **DO NOT** buy or sell firearms, ammunition or explosives for food stamps; if you do, you can never get food stamps again.
- **DO NOT** buy or sell illegal drugs for food stamps; if you do, you cannot get food stamps for 12 months for the 1st offense and permanently for the 2nd offense.
- **DO NOT** use other people's EBT card or FS benefits.
- **DO NOT** receive food stamp benefits in more than one state for the same month. Any individual found to have made a fraudulent statement or representation of identity or residence shall be ineligible to receive food stamps for 10 years.

Benefit Repayment

- You may be required to repay benefits you received from FI (including child care and transportation) and FS that you should not have received even if you received them through no fault of your own.
- DSS may apply any benefits removed from your inactive EBT account to repay an outstanding FS claim(s).
- DSS seeks repayment of claims from any federal and/or state tax refunds that may be due you. The information that you give DSS, including SSNs, may be referred to federal/state agencies for claims collection action.

Fair Hearings

- If you do not agree with a decision made in your case, you may request a Fair Hearing, orally for FS or in writing for FI and all other programs, by contacting your county DSS office or SCDSS, Division of Individual and Provider Rights, P.O. Box 1520, Columbia, S.C. 29202-1520, 1-800-311-7220 for FI and FS.
- To request continuation of your FI or FS benefits, while you wait for the hearing, the request must be made within 10 days from the date of the notice you receive lowering or stopping your benefits.
- If the hearing decision is not in your favor, the benefits will have to be repaid.
- The maximum time to request a hearing after you get a notice lowering or stopping your benefits is: 60 days for FI and 90 days for FS.

Report Changes

- You must report certain changes in your circumstances to DSS.
- Your failure to report changes is considered to be withholding of information and will permit DSS to recover any benefits paid to you in error.
- You may write a letter, phone your case manager or use the Change Report Form to report changes between recertifications/redeterminations.
- County Telephone Number (if you need to report changes you may call collect): _____

Food Stamp Program

For benefit groups who must complete a mailed recertification form, you are only required to report changes at recertification (mailed or face-to-face), unless your gross income exceeds 130% of poverty. This change must be reported within the first 10 days of the month after the month the change occurred.

For all other benefit groups:
Report these changes within 10 days

from the date you learn about them:

- Change in your address
- Person(s) moving in or out of your home
- Resource changes (savings accounts, land, buildings, cars, etc.)
- Person(s) in your household getting a Social Security card

Report these changes within 10 days of the date you receive your first check or the date you receive your

changed income:

- Change in a job
- Change in salary or hourly rate of pay
- Change from part-time to full-time or full-time to part-time work
- Change in unearned income from nonprivate sources of more than \$50
- Change in unearned income from private sources of more than \$100

Family Independence Program

Report these changes within 10 days:

- Change in a job
- Change in your address or residence
- Person(s) moving in or out of your home

Report this change within 5 days:

- Any household member temporarily living away from the household who has decided not to return to the household.

Support Services

Report these changes within 10 days:

- Person(s) moving in or out of your home who receive Support Services
- Change in your address or residence
- Change in a job
- New source of income
- Change in hours of employment
- Changes in the hours or days of school or training activities

Civil Rights

- In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) policy, DSS is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. Under the Food Stamp Act and USDA policy, discrimination is prohibited also on the basis of religion or political beliefs. To file a complaint of discrimination, contact DSS, USDA or HHS at the following offices:

S.C. Dept. of Social Services

Office of Civil Rights

P.O. Box 1520

Columbia, S.C. 29202-1520

1-800-311-7220

TTY 1-800-311-7219

USDA

Director, Office of Civil Rights

Room 326-W, Whitten Bldg.

1400 Independence Ave., SW

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

(202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD)

HHS

Director, Office for Civil Rights

Room 506-F

200 Independence Ave., SW

Washington, D.C. 20201

Voice (877) 696-6775/TDD (202) 619-3257

DSS, USDA and HHS are equal opportunity providers and employers.

- A Civil Rights pamphlet will be given to you, by your case manager, with information on how to file a complaint.

Appointment and Interview

Please bring the following items to your interview if available:

- Birth certificates or other document to establish your relationship to all children you are applying for
- Social Security cards for all family members for whom you want benefits – children and adults.
- Picture identification (driver's license, state ID card or other government issued ID)
- Bank account statements
- Utility bills
- Rent or mortgage payment receipts
- Pay stubs for the last 4 weeks of work, if you are currently working

Appointment Date and Time

Date: _____

Time: _____

If you cannot keep this appointment, please call your local county DSS office for another appointment.